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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF
THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-second session

REPORT OF THE FORTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

(Geneva, 7 to 11 October 1991)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its forty-second session at the Palais des Nations, at Geneva, from 7 to 11 October 1991. The session was opened by the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Emeka Ayo Azikiwe (Nigeria). He extended a special welcome to her Royal Highness, Princess Martha Louise of Norway, whose concern for humanitarian work was an inspiration to all who worked in this field.

2. In his opening statement, Ambassador Azikiwe referred to the changing international political climate, and to the hopes and uncertainties it brought with it. He emphasized that the plight of refugees continued to grow: since the Committee's last session their numbers had increased, particularly in the developing countries, creating large-scale emergencies and intense suffering. New and imaginative responses were needed. He welcomed, in this context, the efforts currently underway towards achieving enhanced coordination and efficiency by the international humanitarian agencies.

3. Referring then to visits he had made to refugee camps in various African countries, he stressed that the resources made available were inadequate to cover the activities of the UNHCR programmes. He described the commitment he had witnessed of UNHCR field staff and paid special tribute to the new High Commissioner's inspiring leadership in confronting the exceptional challenges of the current year.

4. New methods and common approaches were called for, based on past experience and reflections, with a view to offering effective durable solutions to so many thousands of refugees and displaced persons. There was reason to hope that with the advent of a new era, more efforts would go to prevention, and there would be closer links between durable solutions and protection. Ambassador Azikiwe also referred to the useful work of the Working Group on Solutions and Protection, as reflected in its report. He paid tribute to the efforts of those involved in its preparation.

5. Responses to the problems of poverty and development were an integral part of the solutions to be found, as were questions of human rights and their safeguards. As long as violations occurred, refugee flows would continue.

6. In conclusion, Ambassador Azikiwe emphasized the importance of securing additional accessions to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. There might also be a need to bring the provisions of the Convention in line with UNHCR's broadened mandate. The promulgation of regional instruments should also be encouraged in view of their valuable contribution to the protection of refugees. The important role of non-governmental organizations both in supplying relief materials and in undertaking studies in areas of direct concern to UNHCR must also be gratefully acknowledged.

A. Election of officers

7. Under Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman:	Ambassador B. de Riedmatten (Switzerland)
Vice-Chairman:	Ambassador J. A. Lanus (Argentina)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Zhang Yishan (China)

B. Representation on the Committee

8. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session:

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Israel, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

9. The Governments of the following States were present as observers:

Angola, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burundi, Belarus (Republic of), Cameroon, Chile, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe. The Sovereign Order of Malta was also represented by an observer.

10. The United Nations system was represented as follows:

The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), Office of the Executive Delegate of the Secretary-General, Central Evaluation Unit of the United Nations Secretariat, Centre for Human Rights, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Office (ILO), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT), Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), World Food Programme (WFP).

11. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented by observers:

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), Islamic Development Bank, Commission of the European Communities, Council of Europe, International Organization for Migration (IOM), League of Arab States, Organization of African Unity (OAU).

12. The following other organizations which have received a standing invitation to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly as observers were represented at the session: Palestine.

13. The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) were also represented at the session.

14. Some 96 non-governmental organizations were represented by observers.

C. Adoption of the Agenda and other Organizational Matters

15. The Executive Committee adopted by consensus the following agenda (document A/AC.96/772):

1. Opening of the session.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

4. General debate.

5. (a) Review of UNHCR programmes financed by voluntary funds in 1990-91 and adoption of the proposed programmes and budget for 1992;

(b) Status of contributions and overall financial requirements for 1991 and 1991;

(c) Administration and Management.

6. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the forty-third session of the Executive Committee.

7. Any other business.

8. Adoption of the draft report of the forty-second session.

9. Closing of the session.

D. Opening Statement by the Chairman of the Executive Committee

16. In his opening statement, Ambassador Bernard de Riedmatten (Switzerland) acknowledged with thanks the excellent work performed by the outgoing Bureau. He also warmly welcomed the High Commissioner's recent appointment, expressing admiration for the manner in which she had risen to the many challenges posed by the current year's events.

17. Reflecting then on the Organization as he had known it personally some 30 years earlier, the Chairman noted how radically circumstances had changed since then. From its initial role of providing protection and assistance to refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War, UNHCR was today confronted with massive population movements, of diverse and complex origins. In some situations, refugees in the traditional sense might only account for a minority. Yet the international community could not be indifferent to the consequences and human suffering associated with those movements.

18. He drew attention, however, to two grounds for optimism. The recent political changes could be expected to generate conditions for a favourable outcome of certain refugee problems and make voluntary repatriation possible: it was the responsibility of the international community to ensure that such

expectations became realities. Secondly, attention was currently focused on the need to review and improve the mechanisms implemented by the international community in providing humanitarian relief in emergencies: in this context UNHCR was taking an active part in the discussions on this topic. Opinions might diverge within the international community on some of these issues and on appropriate solutions. Yet he felt confident that the Executive Committee would adopt a constructive attitude, mindful of how vital they were for many thousands of men, women and children throughout the world.

19. In concluding his opening statement, the Chairman pledged his full commitment to the work ahead, safe in the knowledge that he could count on the full support of the Committee, the High Commissioner and her staff as well as the non-governmental organizations in the shared effort towards finding solutions.

II. GENERAL (Items 4-9)

20. The High Commissioner's opening statement to the Executive Committee is reproduced in the Annex to this Report. The full account of the deliberations of the Committee, including the statements or other interventions made by delegations on all the Agenda items of the meeting, and the closing statements by the Chairman and High Commissioner, are contained in the Summary Records of the session issued as documents A/AC.96/SR.463 to A/AC.96/SR.470.

III. DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Conclusions and Decisions on International Protection

1. General Conclusion on International Protection

21. The Executive Committee,

(a) Notes, with concern, the persistent and complex dimension of today's refugee problems and observed that, although significant progress has been made over the past forty years in resolving these problems, the protection of refugees remains an ongoing, difficult challenge in need of solution-oriented approaches;

(b) Welcomes the continuing readiness of States to receive refugees and offer them protection, as well as to make available considerable resources to meet the needs of refugees, thus demonstrating their strong and continuing humanitarian commitment at the national and international levels;

(c) Emphasizes the primary importance of non-refoulement and asylum as cardinal principles of refugee protection and encourages States to intensify their efforts to protect the rights of refugees, to prevent them from becoming the object of armed attacks in camps or settlements, to avoid unnecessary and severe curtailment of their freedom of movement, to ensure conditions of asylum compatible with recognized international standards, and to facilitate their stay in countries of asylum, including through the issue of necessary personal documentation and permission to return after travel abroad;

(d) Expresses concern about the lack of adequate international protection for various groups of refugees in different parts of the world, including a large number of Palestinians, and hoped that efforts would continue within the United Nations system to address their protection needs;

(e) Encourages UNHCR, both at Headquarters and in the field, actively to promote greater support and understanding of UNHCR's policy and activities on behalf of refugee women, including with UNHCR's implementing partners and all appropriate national or international fora where protection problems of refugee women or girls are at issue;

(f) Commends the High Commissioner for the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women (document EC/SCP/67), requests that these guidelines be made an integral part of all UNHCR protection and assistance activities and calls for a progress report on implementation of the guidelines at the forty-third session of the Executive Committee and urges the High Commissioner to maintain the position of Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women;

(g) Reaffirms Conclusion No. 59 (XL) on refugee children adopted at the fortieth session of the Executive Committee and reiterates the importance of providing adequate protection and assistance to ensure the safety and development of refugee children and, in this connection, welcomes the High Commissioner's decision to establish a new post of Coordinator on Refugee Children;

(h) Reiterates that the current size and complexity of the world refugee situation require vigorous promotion of existing protection principles, as well as full and open debate on new directions for protection and on further development of the law, paying particular attention to the responsibilities of States to resolve refugee situations and, especially with respect to countries of origin, to eliminate causes of refugee flows;

(i) Calls upon the High Commissioner in this regard actively to explore new options for preventive strategies which are consistent with protection principles, the ways in which State responsibility and burden-sharing mechanisms might be strengthened and public information strategies could be used to complement protection activities;

(j) Requests the High Commissioner to reinforce efforts to encourage or promote voluntary repatriation of refugees and their safe reintegration in the countries of origin, and urges States to facilitate these efforts, including by ensuring respect for the voluntary nature of any repatriation movement and by allowing their citizens to return in safety and dignity to their homes without harrassment, arbitrary detention or physical threats during or after return;

(k) Welcomes the recent accessions by Romania and Poland to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, appeals to States which have not yet acceded to these instruments to do so, thereby promoting international burden-sharing and facilitating the handling and resolution of refugee situations, and encourages all States actively to support the efforts of the High Commissioner to promote universal accession;

(l) Expresses appreciation to the High Commissioner for the interim report on implementation of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and calls on all States which have not yet done so to respond to the questionnaire on implementation circulated by the High Commissioner;

(m) Acknowledges the value of reporting by States Parties on implementation of their responsibilities under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and requests UNHCR to accord public access to States' replies to the afore-mentioned questionnaire with the agreement of the States concerned;

(n) Notes that growing misuse of asylum procedures could compromise the institution of asylum and the maintenance of fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures, and recalled Conclusion No. 46 (j) (XXXVIII) which called upon States to ensure that measures to discourage abusive use of asylum procedures have no detrimental effect on the fundamental principles of international protection, including on the institution of asylum;

(o) Recognizes that the establishment of and access of all asylum-seekers to fair and efficient procedures are important elements in a coherent international strategy for the management and resolution of refugee situations and recalls in this connection Conclusion No. 8 (XXVIII) on Determination of Refugee Status, Conclusion No. 15 (XXX) on Refugees without an Asylum Country, Conclusion No. 30 (XXXIV) on the Problem of Manifestly Unfounded or Abusive Applications for Refugee Status or Asylum and Conclusion No. 58 (XL) concerning the Problem of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers who Move in an Irregular Manner from a Country in which They Had Already Found Protection;

(p) Agrees, in view of the importance of the notion of safe country and the fact of ongoing consideration on it in other fora, that the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection should continue discussion of the notion, with a view to reaching conclusions on the matter;

(q) Underlines the possibility of use of the cessation clauses of the 1951 Convention in situations where a change of circumstances in a country is of such a profound and enduring nature that refugees from that country no longer require international protection, and can no longer continue to refuse to avail themselves of the protection of their country, provided that it is recognized that compelling reasons may, for certain individuals, support the continuation of refugee status, and calls upon UNHCR to explore in the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection the application of the cessation clauses;

(r) Reaffirms Conclusion No. 50 (l) (XXXIX), reiterates its call to States actively to explore and promote measures favourable to stateless persons, including accession to the international instruments pertaining to stateless persons, and in this connection believes it would be useful for United Nations human rights bodies to address statelessness issues, including the problem of arbitrary deprivation of nationality and the content of the right to a nationality;

(s) Notes with appreciation the efforts of the High Commissioner to promote refugee law through existing resources, drawing on external private funding, and calls upon the High Commissioner to strengthen the Office's training activities, in particular through training courses directed to Government officials and others working directly with refugees and asylum-seekers;

(t) Notes with concern the precarious security situation prevailing in some areas where refugees are located which has also put the staff of UNHCR at considerable risk and calls upon States to protect the security of international and local staff working in their countries on behalf of refugees;

(u) Welcomes the convening of the World Conference on Human Rights and calls upon the High Commissioner to participate actively in the preparations for and the proceedings of the Conference, bearing in mind particularly that the matter of human rights and mass exoduses merits further serious consideration;

(v) Calls upon the High Commissioner to continue to contribute, as appropriate, to the deliberations of international human rights bodies.

2. Decision on the Report of the Working Group on Solutions and Protection

22. The Executive Committee,

Accepting with appreciation the Report of the Working Group on Solutions and Protection to the forty-second session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (document EC/SC/64),

(a) Decides to request the High Commissioner to convene such inter-sessional meetings of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection as may be necessary to continue the constructive discussions on pending issues of the Report of the Working Group, as well as on other relevant protection matters, and to seek consensus on action-oriented follow-up, as appropriate, of the Report, its recommendations, and the other relevant matters;

(b) Recognizes the possibility, in this connection, for the Sub-Committee to utilise outside expertise as appropriate;

(c) Decides further to request the High Commissioner to report to the Executive Committee at its forty-third session on progress in the deliberations of the Sub-Committee.

3. Conclusion on the Report on Resettlement as an Instrument of Protection

23. The Executive Committee,

Reaffirming the link between international protection and resettlement as an instrument of protection and its important role as a durable solution in specific circumstances,

(a) Calls on governments in a position to assist, to establish refugee admission ceilings, in the context of international burden-sharing;

(b) Requests States when setting refugee admission ceilings to include an adequate contingency provision which could be available depending on need to address rapidly evolving situations;

(c) Recognizes that rapidly evolving situations can result in fluctuating resettlement requirements from one year to another and that admission ceilings should be adaptable to such developments;

(d) Recognizes the need for rapid and flexible response to UNHCR resettlement requirements in particular for vulnerable groups and emergency protection cases subject to refugee admission requirements of receiving States;

(e) Acknowledges the utility of close consultation with UNHCR in the resettlement activities of the Office;

(f) Recognizes that in reviewing UNHCR resettlement requests the protection element inherent in such requests should be taken into account;

(g) Emphasizes that UNHCR pursues resettlement only as a last resort, when neither voluntary repatriation nor local integration is possible, when it is in the best interests of the refugees and where appropriate.

B. Conclusion on Refugee Women

24. The Executive Committee,

Having considered the Progress Report on the Implementation of the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women (EC/SC.2/47) and the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women (EC/SCP/59),

Recalling previous conclusions of the thirty-ninth, fortieth and forty-first sessions on refugee women,

(a) Expresses appreciation for the Progress Report on the Implementation of the UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women (EC/SC.2/47) and commends the Office of the High Commissioner on progress in implementing the Policy;

(b) Welcomes the development of a comprehensive set of Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women;

(c) Notes with satisfaction the initiation of various activities in Regional Bureaux to integrate the concerns of refugee women;

(d) Commends the Office of the High Commissioner on the initiative which resulted in International Women's Day 1991, being dedicated globally to refugee women;

(e) Welcomes the attention given to refugee women by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in its resolution on Refugee and Displaced Women and Children, adopted at its twelfth plenary session (E/1991/23);

(f) Notes with serious concern that progress continues to be limited on previous resolutions related to statistics, training, reporting, and recruitment of female staff, particularly field staff in the health, social services and protection areas, who are essential to the effective delivery of UNHCR programmes to refugee women;

(g) Notes that the assignment of the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women funded through earmarked donor funds will terminate on 1 July 1992;

(h) Stresses the ongoing need to implement and monitor the effectiveness of the Policy on Refugee Women (A/AC.96/754) and the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women (EC/SCP/67);

(i) Requests the High Commissioner to provide at the forty-third session of the Executive Committee a further progress report on the implementation of the Policy on Refugee Women, with specific focus on the issues mentioned in para. (f) above, in addition to a general evaluation of the success in implementing the UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women;

(j) Urges the High Commissioner to maintain commitment at the highest levels of UNHCR to refugee women's concerns by continuing the position of Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women reporting to the Deputy High Commissioner, financed adequately through regular resources in order to sustain progress in this area;

(k) Calls upon the High Commissioner to ensure active management support in favour of mainstreaming refugee women's issues in the areas of data collection, recruitment and status of female staff in the field and at Headquarters, training, reporting, staff appraisals and evaluation;

(l) Calls upon the High Commissioner to expand the "People-Oriented Planning" training programmes and particularly to address concerns of refugee women in emergency situations, with the goal of sensitizing and training all UNHCR staff;

(m) Encourages the High Commissioner to improve public information activities in order to promote a greater support and understanding of UNHCR's policy and programmes for refugee women among other UN organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the general public.

C. Conclusion on Refugee Children

25. The Executive Committee,

Having considered the Report on the Situation of Refugee Children (EC/SC.2/48),

Recalling previous conclusions of the Executive Committee (Conclusions No. 47 (XXXVIII) and No. 59 (XL) which drew attention to the special needs and vulnerability of refugee children,

Reiterating its concern for the welfare of refugee children who constitute around one-half of the world's refugee population and whose situation as summarized in the above-mentioned Report calls for urgent action,

Wishing to make a more concerted effort on behalf of refugee children in the light of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and along the lines of the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s which singles out refugee children as among those in especially difficult circumstances,

(a) Urges the High Commissioner to continue her efforts on their behalf, especially by enhancing the administrative arrangements in the Office to address the particular needs of refugee children;

(b) Welcomes the High Commissioner's decision to establish a new post as coordinator on refugee children to ensure the coordination and follow-up of the policy on refugee children within UNHCR;

(c) Calls on Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to assist the High Commissioner in this regard and expresses warm appreciation to those who have taken concrete steps to do so;

(d) Reiterates its invitation to Governments, other United Nations bodies, especially UNICEF, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and refugees themselves to work with UNHCR in the implementation of the Guidelines on Refugee Children;

(e) Suggests that UNHCR take steps to ensure that the standards set forth in the Guidelines on Refugee Children serve as a basis for programme planning and budget preparation;

(f) Underscores the need for UNHCR staff to be active advocates on protection, as well as other matters, on behalf of refugee children, especially those who are unaccompanied by their parents;

(g) Requests that UNHCR include as part of its annual budget proposals, the most recent data on the population which is to be assisted, disaggregated by age as well as gender (as previously requested by the Executive Committee).

D. Conclusion on the Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA)

26. The Executive Committee,

(a) Welcomes the progress that has been achieved in the implementation of many of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan of Action on Indo-Chinese Refugees, and emphasizes the need for continued efforts to ensure full and balanced implementation of all the mutually reinforcing elements of that Plan;

(b) Welcomes in this regard the statement of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees at its meeting on 30 April 1991, which reaffirmed the fundamental principles underlying the Comprehensive Plan of Action, in particular the discouragement of clandestine departures and the emphasis on regular departures, and that persons determined not to be refugees should return to their country of origin in accordance with international practice reflecting the responsibilities of States towards their own citizens;

(c) Welcomes the European Community's initiative for an international programme for the reintegration of Vietnamese returnees in their country of origin, and urges donor governments which are able to do so to contribute to this programme;

(d) Welcomes progress made at the Fourth Tripartite Thai/Lao/UNHCR meeting in Luang Prabang from 27 to 29 June 1991 and at the First Tripartite China/Lao/UNHCR meeting in Kunming from 7 to 9 July 1991, on the repatriation of Lao refugees and asylum-seekers and calls upon the High Commissioner to reinforce efforts for the return and reintegration of the Lao population from Thailand and China;

(e) Calls upon the international community to contribute generously to programmes under the Comprehensive Plan of Action, including the Laotian repatriation and reintegration operation.

E. Conclusion on Repatriation to Cambodia

27. The Executive Committee,

Recalling the conclusion of the Executive Committee on Repatriation to Cambodia adopted at its forty-first session (A/AC.96/760 para. 26),

Noting that following an agreement reached among the Cambodian parties, the Five Permanent Members of the Security Council and the Co-Chairman of the Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia, the signature of a comprehensive political settlement is expected to take place on 23 October 1991,

Stressing the urgency of the preparatory work, including demining of border crossings, access roads and resettlement sites,

Noting that on 1 October 1991, the Secretary-General renewed his call for the funding of the preparatory phase of this operation, estimated at $ 33 million,

(a) Calls upon all Governments concerned to respond generously to the Secretary-General's appeal for voluntary contributions to the repatriation operation as outlined in the Secretary-General's renewed appeal;

(b) Calls upon all Governments and parties concerned to contribute to the creation of a climate of security, confidence, and conducive to human rights, and to work constructively towards the early implementation of measures to be organized by UNHCR for the safe repatriation and reintegration of returnees;

(c) Urges all parties to cooperate with the international authorities to ensure that the repatriation to Cambodia takes place in full accord with the Paris agreements and with international monitoring.

F. Conclusion on the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA)

28. The Executive Committee,

Noting with satisfaction the concerted efforts of the countries of Central America, Belize and Mexico in finding lasting solutions to the problems of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, thereby carrying out the principles and aims of the CIREFCA Plan of Action, as an integral part of ongoing efforts to achieve peace and democracy in the region,

Considering that the substantial progress in the peace dialogue in El Salvador and Guatemala will stimulate new voluntary repatriation movements as well as the settlement of internally displaced populations,

Receiving with appreciation the report presented by the President of the CIREFCA Follow-up Committee,

Recognizing the substantial support provided to the CIREFCA process since its inception by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the donor community, UNHCR and UNDP, as well as national and international NGOs,

(a) Exhorts the Central American countries, Belize and Mexico to pursue their implementation of programmes which integrate refugees, returnees and displaced populations into national development plans;

(b) Reaffirms the importance of elaborating these activities in the context of respect for fundamental protection and human rights principles, as contained in the CIREFCA Plan of Action;

(c) Calls upon the Office of the Secretary-General, UNHCR and UNDP to maintain their engagement to the overall CIREFCA process;

(d) Calls upon the international community to continue and reinforce its support to the CIREFCA process in order to consolidate progress achieved to date.

(e) Endorses the special attention placed by the seven countries on the particular needs of women and children, as well as in elaborating measures to protect or restore the environment;

(f) Underlines its support for the decision of the countries members of CIREFCA to convene a Second International Meeting of the Follow-up Committee in El Salvador in March 1992, in order to analyse progress to date in implementing the Plan of Action, and to devise an appropriate strategy to address new challenges in the light of the evolution of the political and socio-economic situation in the region.

G. Decisions on Administrative and Financial Matters

A

29. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed the information contained in UNHCR activities financed by voluntary funds: Report for 1990-1991 and proposed programmes and budget for 1992 (document A/AC.96/774 Parts I-VI); the Overview of UNHCR Activities: Report for 1990-1991 (A/AC.96/775 and A/AC.96/775/Corr.1); the UNHCR Programme/Funding Projections for 1991 (EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.15); the Information Note on UNHCR Evaluation Activities (A/AC.96/776); and the Major Changes in UNHCR General Programmes Target - 1991/1992 (EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.22),

Having taken note of the Voluntary Funds Accounts for the Year 1990, the Audit Opinion and the Report of the United Nations Board of Auditors thereon (documents A/AC.96/779 and A/AC.96/779/Add.1),

Welcoming the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), (document A/AC.96/780),

(a) Approves the country and area programmes and the overall allocations for the 1992 General Programmes amounting to $373,054,800 (including $ 20 million Emergency Fund and a Programme Reserve of $ 32,095,900) as contained in document A/AC.96/774 (Parts I to VI), and as included in column 10 of Table II of document A/AC.96/775;

(b) Authorizes the High Commissioner to effect such adjustments in projects, country or area programmes and overall allocations, as may be required by changes affecting the refugee programmes for which they were planned, using the Programme Reserve where necessary, taking into account the information contained in the document on Major Changes in UNHCR General Programmes Target - 1991/1992 (document EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.22), and to report such adjustments to the Executive Committee at its next session;

(c) Calls upon the High Commissioner to undertake a comprehensive review of reports to the Executive Committee on UNHCR activities financed by voluntary funds, taking into account the recommendations of the ACABQ (A/AC.96/780) concerning simplification of reporting;

(d) Calls upon UNHCR to ensure that such a review addresses the need for country or area proposals to define clearly priorities and programme options and how proposed programmes meet priority refugee needs;

(e) Calls upon UNHCR, in consultation with the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, to ensure that the results of such a review are taken into account in preparing documentation for the forty-third session of the Executive Committee in 1992;

(f) Invites UNHCR to adapt the Guidelines on Refugee Children and the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women as tools to be used by field offices in their training and their programmes and budget planning process;

(g) Recommends continuation of the practice of inter-sessional meetings of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters to review, inter alia, implementation of UNHCR's General Programmes, including proposed adjustments in country programming levels;

(h) Urges UNHCR to strengthen its internal control procedures to address problems in the administration of UNHCR funds as reported by the Board of Auditors, and also calls upon UNHCR to ensure that implementing partners, governmental and non-governmental, take the appropriate steps to ensure compliance with UNHCR criteria on reporting requirements;

(i) Encourages UNHCR in its efforts to improve its communication strategy as an essential tool to raise awareness of refugee issues within public opinion, to influence public policy, and to gain additional donor support.

B

30. The Executive Committee,

Having taken note of the information and proposals contained in UNHCR's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies (EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.14),

Recognizing the need for UNHCR to enhance its capacity to respond effectively and expeditiously to refugee emergencies,

Underlining the fact that such an enhanced emergency preparedness and response capability for addressing new refugee situations will also assure the quality of UNHCR's contribution to any UN system-wide response to complex, humanitarian emergency situations,

Underlining also the importance of coordination with local emergency relief entities in the affected country to ensure effective emergency preparedness and response,

Recognizing with appreciation the various contributions of Member States to assuring that UNHCR does have the capacity to respond to refugee emergencies,

(a) Calls on UNHCR to continue its efforts to improve its capacity to respond to emergencies along the lines described in the conference room paper, including the possibility of cooperation with agencies having existing stockpiling facilities;

(b) Endorses the proposals of the High Commissioner in this regard as set out in the conference room paper and calls for their early implementation;

(c) Suggests that UNHCR make active use of the Guidelines on Refugee Children and Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women in planning and executing any refugee emergency operation;

(d) Urges all States to assist the High Commissioner in assuring an adequate and effective emergency preparedness and response capability, especially by providing all necessary support to UNHCR for this purpose and, in the case of emergencies, by taking immediate measures to facilitate a timely response;

(e) Requests that UNHCR discuss with those NGO's with proven expertise in particular sectors, the establishment of stand-by agreements to be used rapidly to establish implementing-partner relationship in emergency situations;

(f) Encourages the High Commissioner to continue to work closely with the Secretary-General so he can assure that the United Nations is in a position to respond in a coordinated and effective fashion to complex, humanitarian emergency situations;

(g) Invites the High Commissioner to keep the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters regularly informed about the implementation of the content of this decision.

C

31. The Executive Committee,

Noting the contents and proposals in the conference room paper Voluntary Repatriation: Resource Mobilization for Voluntary Repatriation Movements and Reintegration Assistance (EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.18),

Stressing that opportunities for voluntary repatriation as the preferred durable solution should be utilized to the fullest and urging States to facilitate efforts towards this goal,

Realizing that one of the factors that often limits the maximum utilization of these possibilities for voluntary repatriation is the unavailability of timely funding,

(a) Calls on the High Commissioner to explore with Member States and other donors, especially in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, the range of options for addressing this problem, such as the possibility of including the costs associated with imminent voluntary repatriation movements in the 1993 General Programmes budget;

(b) Calls on UNHCR to promote in this regard further regional approaches to voluntary repatriation;

(c) Requests the High Commissioner to present to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters a list of priority areas where voluntary repatriation is being encouraged and is likely to succeed, including an estimate of the associated costs.

D

32. The Executive Committee,

Having noted the documents relating to the evaluation activities of the Office (A/AC.96/776; EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.19),

Recalling its earlier request that the Office's evaluation activities continue to be enhanced (A/AC.96/760, para. 29 A (m)),

Considering evaluation activities to be an essential management tool, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of UNHCR's programmes,

(a) Requests the High Commissioner to continue her efforts to assure that the evaluation function in the Office is adequately resourced, even at times of emergencies;

(b) Reiterates its belief that evaluation, both internal and external, of UNHCR's activities when professionally and independently undertaken will lead to greater efficiencies in UNHCR's programmes and commensurate savings;

(c) Requests the High Commissioner to ensure that the recommendations of the Central Evaluation Section, if appropriate, are followed up and implemented to the extent possible and to report thereon;

(d) Expresses its appreciation of summaries of UNHCR evaluation reports and asks that these summaries continue to be made available to the Executive Committee;

(e) Supports the idea of joint UNHCR-donor evaluation exercises;

(f) Calls for the establishment of baseline data concerning refugee women and refugee children in order to adequately evaluate the performance of UNHCR in implementing its policy on refugee women and refugee children.

E

33. The Executive Committee,

Taking note of the efforts made by UNHCR and relevant agencies to enhance their collaboration on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons,

(a) Welcomes UNDP Governing Council decision 91/17 calling for intensified cooperation between UNDP, UNHCR and other relevant agencies on, inter alia, identification and provision of integration and development assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

(b) Encourages the High Commissioner to continue with her advocacy of greater inter-agency cooperation and in particular to undertake with the UNDP Administrator steps to bring to fruition joint activities in development fields aimed at benefiting refugees, returnees, displaced persons and their host communities.

F

34. The Executive Committee,

Having taken note of the conference room paper The Fund Raising Function of UNHCR: Strategies for Raising Funds for UNHCR (EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.20),

Recognizing the ever growing number of calls on UNHCR's services to respond to refugee situations, covering a wide range of activities from emergency assistance through to voluntary repatriation,

Realizing that UNHCR needs a coherent fund raising strategy to assure the mobilization of the necessary resources for its work,

(a) Welcomes the broad outlines of such a strategy as set out in the said conference room paper, in particular the proposals for broadening the donor base of UNHCR and the clear articulation of funding priorities;

(b) Encourages UNHCR to assess assistance policies of traditional donors - in particular their regional and sectoral priorities - with a view to broadening the range of funding sources;

(c) Urges UNHCR to give priority to the formulation of an effective communications strategy that will be directly supportive of UNHCR's major fund raising objectives;

(d) Encourages UNHCR to further explore the potential of the private sector, whilst stressing the need to closely cooperate with NGOs so as to avoid competition for private sector funds;

(e) Notes with appreciation the continued very strong donor support to UNHCR at a time of unprecedented demands on the Office which require the mobilization of significant financial resources and calls on donors to sustain their support so as to ensure the timely and full funding of current activities as well as those programmed for 1992;

(f) Reiterates the importance for the planning and implementation of activities of the early announcement of pledges, particularly at the Pledging Conference, and asks that these pledges, if earmarked, be done so in the broadest possible way in order to allow UNHCR the flexibility to allocate funds according to the most pressing needs;

(g) Requests UNHCR, in accordance with the relevant recommendation of the ACABQ in its report A/AC.96/780, to enter into consultations with donors in order to achieve greater harmonization and standardization of reporting requirements as well as streamlining of payment procedures and thus make more efficient use of human resources;

(h) Calls upon those Governments which do not contribute to UNHCR or which could increase their contributions, and are in a position to do so, to provide financial support in the spirit of international burden-sharing.

G

35. The Executive Committee,

Having reviewed the documentation related to human resources management and administration (A/AC.96/775; EC/SC.2/49), and the Note on the Review of the Classification of Directors' (D.2) posts in UNHCR (EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.16), and the comments of ACABQ thereon,

Bearing in mind the importance of maintaining a qualified, independent and geographically-balanced staff,

(a) Takes note of the report containing several issues of concern submitted by the chairman of the Staff Council (EC/SC.2/49), in accordance with the invitation formulated by the Executive Committee at its last session;

(b) Takes note of the proposals contained in document EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.16;

(c) Requests that, prior to the further consideration of these proposals, the High Commissioner provide a comprehensive note on UNHCR's human-resource development strategy at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administration and Finance. The document could address at the same time both the classification of Directors' posts and other personnel policies, such as recruitment, mobility/rotation, status of women staff, performance evaluation, promotion criteria and Headquarters/field personnel ratio;

(d) Requests the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, in the light of its consideration of these human resource issues, to take appropriate action, including a possible recommendation on the proposals in document EC/SC.2/1991/CRP.16 to the Executive Committee;

(e) Agrees to act upon the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters at the earliest possible opportunity;

(f) Calls on the High Commissioner to ensure that the Administration and staff promote a meaningful dialogue, particularly through use of the established joint staff-management machinery;

(g) Encourages the High Commissioner to pursue the ACABQ recommendations for the simplification and transparency of reports on UNHCR activities financed by voluntary funds as they relate to human resources in order to more comprehensively portray the situation at Headquarters and in the field amongst all categories of personnel;

(h) Invites the Chairman of the Staff Council to submit a report on issues of interest to the staff to the Executive Committee at its forty-third session.

H. Provisional Agenda of the forty-third session of the Executive Committee

36. The Committee adopted by consensus the following provisional agenda for the meeting of the forty-third session of the Executive Committee (document A/AC.96/XLII/CRP.1):

1. Opening of the session

2. Election of Officers

3. Adoption of the Agenda and other organizational matters

4. General debate

5. (a) Review of UNHCR programmes financed by Voluntary Funds in 1991-1992; adoption of the 1993 General Programmes budget and of any revision to the 1992 budget

   (b) Status of contributions and overall financial requirements for 1992 and 1993

   (c) Administration and Management

6. Consideration of the provisional agenda for the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee

7. Any other business

8. Adoption of the Draft Report of the forty-third session

9. Closing of the session

I. Government Observer participation in 1992

37. The Executive Committee considered and approved applications by the following Government observer delegations for participation in the Sub-Committees of the Whole on International Protection and Administrative and Financial Matters, as well as in the informal sessions of the Executive Committee during 1992:

Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Uruguay, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.

J. Interpretative Declarations or Reservations relating to the Conclusions and Decisions of the Committee

A. 1. General Conclusion on International Protection

38. The delegation of Israel objected to the inclusion of the words "including a large number of Palestinians" in sub-paragraph (d).

ANNEX I

Opening statement of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the forty-second session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I welcome you all to this session of the Executive Committee. Allow me to extend a special welcome to Her Royal Highness, Princess Märtha Louise of Norway. This morning Her Royal Highness graciously accepted to become UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador. The Princess' interest in humanitarian issues is a clear reflection of the fine tradition of her family and her country. I should also like to congratulate you on your election, Mr. Chairman, as well as the Vice Chairman and Rapporteur. I look forward to continuing with this Bureau the close cooperation I have enjoyed with Ambassador Azikiwe and his Bureau. The outgoing Chairman's field trips are indicative of his own and, indeed, this Committee's close involvement and active support for refugee matters, for which I am grateful. We need it more than ever. My friend and colleague, Mr. James Ingram, Executive Director of WFP will address the meeting later today. His presence here, returning a visit I paid to the opening of WFP's Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes last May, shows the ever closer cooperation between our two agencies.

Mr. Chairman, the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a mirror of the world we live in. It is often as if the morning news sets our agenda of the day. In an age, where it is sometimes difficult to see whether news is triggered by events, or events by the news media, it is important for an institution like UNHCR to have both the capacity to respond promptly and to grasp the implications of the changes in the surrounding world. In my statement today, I would like to share with you some thoughts on how I see UNHCR in this fundamentally changed and changing world, and more particularly how UNHCR's operational capacity must be balanced by an appropriate policy formulation capability. I make my remarks after less than eight months in office - but after a period, which, in the opinion of many who have been involved in refugee matters much longer than I, has been truly unprecedented in many respects.

In the Persian Gulf, we have witnessed the largest and fastest refugee exodus in recent times. Less than five months after 1.5 million Iraqis fled their homes, all but some 70,000 are back. Some have been able to return to their homes, others - numbering some 500,000 - are back in their country but still displaced. A swift and volatile exodus has been followed by an equally fast but fragile return.

In the Horn of Africa, massive humanitarian operations have had to substitute for more constructive, economic and social development efforts. Continuing conflicts, timid democratisation and tenuous peace initiatives make that region a mixture of hope and concern.

In Europe, the free movements of people that only recently were seen as the harbinger of political change in the East have now become the source of deep concern - sometimes fears - in the West. Growing numbers of asylum-seekers have stretched existing procedures and practices to their

limits and put the institution of asylum to test. On the other hand, the countries in Eastern Europe which not so long ago were producers of refugees are now receiving them. I believe it should now be possible to look at the application of the "cessation clause" in this region. As many of these countries join the work of this Committee I welcome them, as I do their accessions or intention to accede to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. These acts underline the continued relevance of the refugee instruments in the post Cold War era.

1991 has been a year marked, not only by exodus but also by new opportunities for returns. Last month, I signed an agreement with the Government of South Africa, paving the way for a UNHCR presence in South Africa and the safe return of exiles.

Right now, we are standing in the wings ready to repatriate Western Saharans to participate in the referendum on the future of the Territory.

In Cambodia, as the lead agency for voluntary repatriation, we are accelerating our preparations to keep pace with the rapid and positive political developments. But further action is hampered by inadequate response to the Secretary-General's appeal last year on behalf of UNHCR for 33 million US dollars needed for preparatory arrangements. I must take this opportunity to urge governments strongly to make immediate and generous contributions.

Some solutions are going almost unnoticed. In Central America, for instance, refugees have been returning home in large numbers, thanks to regional peace initiatives and the CIREFCA process. During my trip to Central America later this month, I shall be closing the last refugee camp for Nicaraguans in Costa Rica.

We are establishing a presence in Eritrea as a prelude to significant returns from Sudan. The peace agreement in Angola makes it realistic to plan for the return of 300,000 refugees early next year. Negotiations are continuing for a lasting solution to the Rwandese refugee problem. A Tripartite Commission, composed of Burundi, Tanzania and UNHCR, is planning for the return of some 94,000 refugees to Burundi. Tripartite discussions between Laos, Thailand and UNHCR are expected to lead to the voluntary return of some 55,000 Laotians over the next few years, while returns to Vietnam now exceed 13,000.

The outflow from Vietnam has subsided considerably, with the notable exception of arrivals to Hong Kong. However, the stalemate in finding a dignified and humane solution to those determined not to be refugees has hampered further progress. Consultations on this important subject are continuing and I am hopeful that a consensus can be reached soon so that all those who have not qualified as refugees can return home in safety and dignity.

In Afghanistan, notwithstanding the security situation, some 200,000 refugees have returned from Pakistan this year. Likewise, despite continuing insecurity, Liberian refugees are returning to their country. I do hope that political initiatives will lead to more orderly solutions to this problem which is weighing heavily on the countries neighbouring Liberia.

New refugee emergencies, actual repatriation operations or prospective return movements, as well as on-going care and maintenance programmes, have created the highest ever UNHCR programme requirements. At the end of last

year, we expected total expenditure in 1991 to be at the level of some 560 million US dollars. Today, the projected total needs for 1991 amount to 982.5 million US dollars. A year of unprecedented needs has been matched by an equally unprecedented response. As of today, donors have made available 785 million US dollars in voluntary contributions. I am deeply thankful for this support. I see it not only as a sign of confidence in UNHCR but also as a clear commitment on the part of the international community to participate in an effort of solidarity and burden-sharing to alleviate the plight and promote solutions for the some 17 million refugees under our care. The contribution of the countries of asylum to this international effort is immeasurable.

Greater support brings with it greater expectations and greater demands. I am acutely conscious that our performance must measure up to the confidence which the international community has placed in us. You will appreciate, Mr. Chairman, the strains on a bureaucracy that in the course of fifteen months has had three High Commissioners and, within a period of eighteen months, has gone through a retrenchment exercise followed by around 60% increase in activity. The administrative and management requirements to respond to the record needs this past year have been staggering.

I have been impressed by the tolerance, patience and commitment of UNHCR staff and their families during these turbulent times. Many of them risk their personal safety in difficult field situations. Some have paid dearly for it. Mr. Chairman, I should like to record a special tribute to six Somali and Ethiopian colleagues who lost their lives during the recent upheavals in their countries. There is no doubt that UNHCR's effectiveness depends heavily on the commitment and contributions of a motivated staff, guided by a competent group of senior managers at the appropriate level as I have recommended in the Note on the Review of the Classification of the Directors' posts. I am eminently aware of the legitimate concerns in areas of staff welfare and job satisfaction. There are a range of personnel issues that need to be addressed but which have gone unattended as we have concentrated on meeting the demands of an exceptional year. I am determined to take a comprehensive look at these issues in the coming months.

Mr. Chairman, as the 40th Anniversary Year of UNHCR draws to a close, issues of migration and refugees have become an increasingly important and essential component in formulating a more open and just world order. The ending of the Cold War has placed before us new challenges. On the one hand, there are risks of further displacement as nationalistic, ethnic and religious tensions flare up. On the other hand, there are immense opportunities for solutions in the changing climate of multilaterism. At the same time, stagnant refugee situations of Afghans, Mozambicans and Liberians, fester, eroding human dignity and impeding regional peace. At this time, I believe that UNHCR must chart a forward-looking strategy which focuses on prevention and solutions and addresses the totality of the refugee problem from exodus and relief to return and reintegration. My strategic plan has three aims.

My <u>first</u> aim is to improve UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response mechanism. In addition to building its own capacity, UNHCR is also entering into agreements with Scandinavian Governments and NGOs for access to their capacities both in terms of staff and equipment. The proposals presented to you at this session will not only enable UNHCR to respond to refugee emergencies, but can contribute also to a UN system-wide emergency response in case of large and complex humanitarian disasters. I have already had the opportunity to pronounce myself on this latter issue during our meeting last

June, and also at the ECOSOC session in July. Let me simply reiterate that, based on our recent experience in the Persian Gulf area and the Horn of Africa, I see a clear need for an arrangement that fully utilises the political and humanitarian potential of the UN while assuring a coordinated operational response to complex emergencies. The goal of coordination should be to facilitate cooperation and not to add to the bureaucratic layer of control. It should be based on a standby arrangement for funds, personnel and equipment and should be supported by a standing inter-agency secretariat.

In responding to emergencies we must not forget those who are the most vulnerable, in other words the women and children. With the example of the Coordinator for Refugee Women to inspire us, I intend to appoint a Coordinator for Refugee Children as soon as possible, thanks to the support of the Government of Norway. In the past few years we have developed some useful policy guidelines on refugee women and children but it is painfully obvious that the Office still has a long way to go in translating the policies into systematic, concrete action. I am committed to improving this important area of UNHCR activities.

Another vulnerable, yet overlooked, element in emergencies, as much as in on-going refugee situations, is the environment. Economising on refugee assistance in the short term may be prohibitively costly on the environment in the long run. The impact of large numbers of refugees on the environment in Malawi and Pakistan are but two examples. We need to give greater consideration to environmental issues in our assistance activities. Degradation of the environment may lead to displacement, and displacement may cause further degradation of the environment. Conversely, sustainable development may reduce displacement. I hope that next year's UNCED Conference in Rio de Janeiro will pay attention to the link between population movements, the environment and development.

My second goal is to pursue every opportunity for voluntary repatriation. In a world where most refugees are confined to over-crowded, makeshift camps in conditions as dismal - if not more dismal - than the situation they have fled, the right to return to one's homeland must be given as much recognition as the right to seek asylum abroad. Renewed confidence in the ability of the United Nations to tackle global challenges is opening up new prospects for peace around the world. The prevention and solution of refugee problems is inextricably linked to these peace-building and peace-keeping efforts. I see 1992 as the year for voluntary repatriation.

It is very encouraging that the prospects for the return of many refugees seem brighter today than in the past. But I am concerned about the kind of life to which they are expected to go back. In July this year I visited Ethiopia, and met many of the Ethiopians who had come back from Somalia. They had come home to escape fighting in Somalia and found themselves hungry and homeless on return. They are back, but in the absence of prospects, the question is: for how long? Is the problem of displacement simply going to be shifted from one side of the border to the other? Are we going to be confronted with returnee emergencies just as we are now facing refugee emergencies? And at what cost to the fragile process of peace in these countries?

The country of origin must accept responsibility for its own citizens - both in terms of conditions which avert forced exile and also which promote voluntary return. However, large scale repatriation can only succeed if there is a concerted international effort to create proper conditions for return.

Most of the countries to which refugees are returning or will return have been devastated by war. They already have large numbers of internally displaced persons, and little or no capacity to reabsorb those who left. Returning refugees can only be properly reintegrated if there are comprehensive programmes for political, economic, and social construction or reconstruction. As such, ensuring the success of voluntary repatriation goes beyond the mandate or resources of UNHCR alone. UNHCR' s short-term relief and aid to returnees must be complemented by and integrated with the national development efforts for the entire population. UNHCR is not a development agency but I am determined to act as a catalyst, sensitising, encouraging, cooperating with development organisations, donors and, most of all, the countries concerned. I am optimistic that the concept of returnee aid and development will attract much interest and support. Firstly, the country of origin would have a clear stake in seeing its citizens return and, in the process, act as a dynamo for local, regional or national development efforts. Secondly, I trust that development organisations and lending institutions will see an interest in contributing to humanitarian solutions which might provide more stability for long-term economic development. Thirdly, donors would wish to see their resources directed towards consolidation of lasting solutions rather than protracted care and maintenance programmes in countries of asylum. Through the Note on Voluntary Repatriation I am providing some thoughts and ideas on this subject and look forward to further reflection with members of the Executive Committee.

My third objective is to promote solutions through preventive measures at the source of the problem. The first step in this approach must be to define who is in need of international protection. The Working Group on Solutions and Protection has helped to clarify some of the issues. But it is important for the international community to arrive at a clear and agreed understanding of who deserves international protection. People leave their homes not because they want to, but because they have to. Refugees flee to save their lives, economic migrants to improve the prospects of life. A better understanding of the different reasons that drive people to move will help to identify the ways in which outflows could possibly be prevented. I should clarify that I define prevention not as building barriers to stop people moving but as removing or reducing the factors which force displacement.

The root causes of refugee flows are ultimately related to political conflict and violation of human rights. When people feel their lives and liberties are secure, they have no reason to seek asylum elsewhere. The responsibility as well as the capacity for addressing these root causes lies with governments and bodies other than UNHCR. But I firmly believe that UNHCR must promote and assist such a course. We must be prepared not only to switch resources as necessary from the country of asylum to the country of origin but also to develop the necessary tools for effective action to avoid refugee flows. Among these tools are: one: closer cooperation with human rights bodies and participation in wider early warning activities. Two: developing country of origin data base. We have already started work on it. Not only will it help develop action to avoid outflows but will also help us to provide advice on refugee status determination, the application of cessation clauses and the "safe country" concept. Three: closer contacts with development and lending institutions. Four: promotion of mass communication campaigns to address the expectations and misconceptions of those seeking to move. We are about to launch a new mass communication strategy in Europe, capitalizing on our experience from Vietnam.

In fact, many of these tools have been tested in Southeast Asia under the Comprehensive Plan for Action. They have been refined and reapplied in our approach to the problem in Albania. I see them as important elements in any strategy to address potential or actual population movements in Europe.

At our June meeting, I said that an important preventive measure must be to respond to the needs of the internally displaced. Their plight is as compelling as that of those who cross national frontiers. The problem, however, goes beyond the capacity of any one agency. What is needed is a coordinated and concerted response from the UN system, ICRC and NGOs. UNHCR's experience, past and present, on behalf of internally displaced persons could serve as useful models for such concerted efforts. The ONUSAL operation in El Salvador could also offer interesting pioneering lessons in this regard. In my view, respect for national sovereignty should not restrict but should rather be reconciled with the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced. We must build on principles of humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law to develop a legal framework and operational guidelines for humanitarian access to those in need.

In developing our strategy on prevention and solutions, let me emphasise that UNHCR should not and will not abrogate its responsibility to promote a liberal asylum policy. At a time when respect for human rights and the rule of law are gaining universal ground, I would like to see a greater emphasis -- and acceptance -- of UNHCR's supervisory protection role in favour of refugees. With this aim in mind, we have begun a review of our resources and structures in Europe, so that new policy priorities can be established and necessary changes introduced to assure efficiency and effectiveness. It should be underlined that in attempting to restructure our existing resources, we are determined to do our utmost to avoid incurring additional costs.

In this context, I believe it is crucial for UNHCR to develop a higher public profile. An effective public information strategy is an essential tool for protection. Public opinion and public policy are shaped by mass media and statements by policy makers. I am deeply concerned to sense a rising xenophobic mood in various countries, and I strongly urge all leaders to use their power and influence to combat these dangerous trends. On its part, UNHCR must contribute to a more informed and credible public debate by providing reliable facts and figures. Thus, we have already begun work within UNHCR to help improve our reporting on refugee statistics.

In concluding let me summarise: our ultimate goal must be to act in such a way that people are not forced to flee or, alternatively, that solutions can be found so that people cease to be refugees. Some of these activities fall squarely within the competence of UNHCR, others require mobilization of and cooperation with Governments, other UN agencies, intergovernmental agencies such as IOM, regional organizations, such as OAU, the Arab League, the Islamic Conference, the EC, Council of Europe, CSCE and the OAS, with ICRC, and of course with NGOs, who remain our unfailing and invaluable partners. A truly comprehensive international effort is required. I take the presence of so many of you today as a clear indication of interest and readiness to join in such efforts.

UNHCR was created 40 years ago in 1951 at the height of the East West confrontation in order to protect and assist those fleeing totalitarian persecution. Eventually the desire of people to move across borders to enjoy freer and better opportunities forced the repressive regimes in Eastern Europe to change. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989 was one of

the most significant events symbolizing the end of the Cold War. The one lesson we can learn from the past is that building walls is no answer against those who feel compelled to flee. The answer should be to build bridges -- between West and East, North and South, allowing democracy, human rights and prosperity to spread. As we meet in the 40th anniversary year, I commit UNHCR to a course that will lead to a more open and just world order in which many refugees will find their way back home and no one would be forced to flee.